“A fine, portly dame who has a smile and a pleasant word for everybody,” -Washington Irving

**Background information:**

**D**olly Madison was born on May 20, 1768 in Guildford County, North Carolina. She was the fourth of eight children in her family. Her first marriage was to John Todd when she was 21. She was just a traditional wife and house keeper then and didn’t have a job. Dolly had two kids with him, one named John Payne Todd and the other was named William Isaac Todd. William died when he was 3 months old, the same day his father died from yellow fever in 1793. Then, she married James Madison.

**Before Presidency:**

Thomas Jefferson took office as president and asked Madison to be his Secretary of state. The Madisons moved to Washington, D.C. from North Carolina. James was the secretary of state from 1801-1809 and then became president after. While he was secretary, though, she went to dinners with him, meeting diplomatic and political people and gaining 8 years of experience for when she would become the first lady. She also was the unofficial hostess for Thomas Jefferson’s dinner parties which made her fairy recognized and liked which helped her husband get votes to be president.

While James Harrison was still running for president there was an attempt by Federalist newspapers in Baltimore and Boston that implied that Dolly had been intimate with President Jefferson to make people dislike her and not vote for James. The plan to lower their votes failed and Dolly’s popularity prevailed.

**Role as First Lady:**

As the first lady she also sought to have supporters, family, and friends into official government positions. She believed that her role with the citizens was as much as the president’s job as hers. Dolly was the first first lady to associate herself with public projects. As a fundraiser, supporter, and board member she helped to found a home for young orphaned girl children in Washington. She also redecorated the public rooms in the white house to impress foreign diplomats with the royal, yet simple design. When in meetings with diplomats she would steer their viewpoints on discussions to generally get them to consider the view of her husband’s. Her cheerful personality, which often masked her deep-rooted worry, had the effect of relaxing her all her visitors.

**Her Legend:**

In the war of 1812 when the British Troops were going to burn the White house, Dolly Madison went back to the white house to save precious items from it, showing her great patriotism for her nation. She removed a painting of George Washington and other national valuables form the White house and saved them from destruction. She wrote a note saying what she saved, too. She was one of the last people to leave the building putting her in great danger as the British moved in.

**Theme-Challenges:**

My topic relates to the theme Challenges because she was still a strong first lady even when the British attacked the white house. When that happened she was one of the last people to exit the White House, putting her in danger, and she saved the items from it.